

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 879

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FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PFR, JM

SUBJECT: P.L. 480 TITLE I

REF: (A) KINGSTON 0823; (B) KINGSTON 0398

1. I WOULD LIKE AGAIN TO RAISE THE SUBJECT OF A P.L. 480 TITLE I PROGRAM FOR JAMAICA FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR. THOUGH OUR REFTELS PRESENTED A COGENT CASE FOR A TITLE I PROGRAM, I FEEL THAT A FURTHER ELABORATION MIGHT PROVE USEFUL IN DISPELLING ANY DOUBTS, EITHER AMONG THE INTERAGENCY STAFF COMMITTEE (ISC) OR OTHERS WHICH MAY EXIST OVER THE MERITS OF FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR JAMAICA.

2. WE BELIEVE THAT THE JAMAICAN TITLE I PROGRAM IS A CLASSICAL EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF FOOD AID AS INTENDED BY THE CONGRESS; IT IS WHOLLY FOCUSED ON DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN GOALS. IT IS USED AS A DEVELOPMENT TOOL BY THE JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT IN REDRESSING A SEVERE AND PERVERSIVE MALNUTRITION PROBLEM. NUTRITION STUDIES CONDUCTED AS RECENTLY AS JUNE 1974, REVEALED THAT THE LOWER TWO-THIRDS

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OF THE NATION OR APPROXIMATELY 1.4 MILLION PERSONS, SUFFER

A SHORTFALL OF 27 PERCENT IN CALORIC INTAKE AND A PROTEIN DEFICIENCY OF 14 PERCENT. THESE LOWER TWO-THIRDS OF THE POPULATION CONSTITUTE IN GREAT PART THE POOREST MAJORITY WHICH THE CONGRESS MANDATED SHOULD BE REACHED THROUGH OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. MALNUTRITION IN JAMAICA, AS IN MANY COUNTRIES, IS PARTICULARLY PERNICIOUS AS IT AFFECTS THE VERY YOUNG MOST SEVERELY, E.G., 50 THOUSAND CHILDREN UNDER FOUR YEARS UNDERWEIGHT FOR THEIR AGE; MORTALITY OF AGE GROUP ONE TO FOUR 4.5 PER THOUSAND AND MAINLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO MALNUTRITION. WE BELIEVE IT IS AXIOMATIC AMONG THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY THAT MALNUTRITION IS A PRIME INHIBITOR TO A COUNTRY'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

3. THE GOJ RECOGNIZING THE TOLL WHICH MALNUTRITION EXTRACTS FROM THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS, ISSUED A NUTRITION POLICY PAPER IN EARLY 1975 WHICH ASSIGNS PRIORITIES TO THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS. THESE PRIORITIES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) YOUNG CHILDREN AND PREGNANT AND NURSING-MOTHERS
- (2) SCHOOL CHILDREN
- (3) LABORERS AT HEAVY WORK
- (4) UNEMPLOYED
- (5) AGED AND INDIGENT PEOPLE.

THE COUNTRY'S USE OF TITLE I FOODS IS STRUCTURED ON THESE PRIORITIES WITH THE FOODS RECEIVED BEING PROVIDED TO GROUPS 1 AND 2; SPECIFICALLY TO 100,000 CHILDREN IN A SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM, 100,000 BABIES UNDER FOUR AND TO MOTHERS IN MCH PROGRAMS. THE GREAT PREPONDERANCE OF THESE RECEIPIENTS CONSTITUTE THE LOWEST ECONOMIC STRATA OF THE JAMAICAN POPULATION WHO COULD ILL AFFORD TO PAY FOR THE FOOD PROVIDED UNDER THE PROGRAM.

4. DURING THE RECENT FLOUR CONTAMINATION EPISODE WHICH AFFECTED THOUSANDS OF PERSONS, TITLE I FOODS WERE MADE AVAILABLE TO GENERAL POPULATION IN THE AFFECTED GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS AS SUBSTITUTE FOR FLOUR-BASED FOODS. THIS IS MENTIONED AS BUT ONE EXAMPLE OF THE HUMANITARIAN USES OF TITLE I ASSISTANCE IN JAMAICA.

5. THE SELF-HELP PROVISIONS OF PAST AND THE PROPOSED CURRENT PROGRAM STRESS CONTINUING EFFORT IN DEVELOPING THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HEALTH/FP/NUTRITION AND AGRICULTURE SECTORS. THESE SELF-HELP EFFORTS PARTICULARLY IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR ARE VITAL TO JAMAICA'S DEVELOPMENT BOTH FROM A SHORT AND LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE. GIVEN THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT BUDGETARY AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROBLEMS, CONTINUED GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN FOOD PRODUCTION ARE NEEDED TO ARREST A DETERIORATING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT; WITH FOOD IMPORTS, (US \$200 MILLION IN 1975 OR 25 PERCENT OF ALL IMPORTS.)

A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE PEJORATIVE ECONOMIC SITUATION.
GOJ PROJECTIONS TO EXPAND FOOD PRODUCTION ARE CITED IN
REF B, HOWEVER, CONTINUATION OF THE TITLE I PROGRAM
COULD SERVE AS A SMALL IMPETUS TO SUSTAIN SUCH EFFORTS.

6. THE "GRDUATION" OF JAMACIA FROM A TITLE II GRANT TO
TITLE I SALE, FURTHER DEMONSTRATES THE CLASSICAL CASE ASPECT
OF THE COUNTRY'S PROGRAM. NO CHANGE IN BENEFICIARIES WAS
MADE WITH THE SWITCH FROM GRANT TO SALES WHICH ATTESTS TO
THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO BOTH IMPROVE THE NATION'S
NUTRITION AND ASSIST THE POORER SEGMENT OF ITS POPULATION.
I BELIEVE THAT IT IS A TENET OF U.S. ASSISTANCE PHILOSOPHY
THAT SUCH COMMITMENT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND RIGHTLY SO.

7. WHILE REALIZING THAT PER CAPITA INCOME IS A KEY FACTOR
IN REACHING DECISION ON DEGREE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO
COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY UNDER FFP PROGRAMS, I WISH TO
REITERATE THAT THE FIGURE IS ESSENTIALLY SPURIOUS IN
THE JAMAICAN CONTEXT. INCOME IN JAMAICA IS MARKEDLY
SKEWED IN DISTRIBUTION WHICH RESULTS IN A MAJOR VARIANCE
BETWEEN ECONOMIC REALITY AND FIGURES. THE BENEFICIARIES
OF TITLE I ASSISTANCE IN JAMAICA ARE PREDOMINANTLY IF NOT
WHOLLY THE POOREST SEGMENT OF ITS POPULATION.

8. I STRONGLY URGE THE CONTINUANCE OF THE PROGRAM AS
I AM CONVINCED IT PRODUCES DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN
DIVIDENDS. WHILE MODES IN SCOPE, IT MONETHELESS SERVES
TO DEMONSTRATE OUR CONTINUING WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST IN
SUCH AREAS WHERE THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING SERIOUS EFFORTS
TO AMELORiate THE POPULATION'S WELL-BEING.
GERARD

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